

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 298 138

TM 012 018

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TITLE Statistical Methodology Content Analysis of Selected Educational Research Journals.  
PUB DATE 88  
NOTE 16p.  
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Information Analyses (070)  
  
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.  
DESCRIPTORS \*Content Analysis; \*Educational Research; Literature Reviews; \*Meta Analysis; \*Periodicals; \*Research Methodology; Statistical Analysis; \*Statistical Inference; Teacher Education

ABSTRACT

Sixty-seven educational research journals were investigated to determine the frequency of usage of inferential statistical techniques therein. The most frequently used statistical methodologies in the literature reviewed, which utilized inferential approaches, are the following: analysis of variance, correlation, t-test, multiple analysis of variance, multiple regression, chi square, post-hoc multiple comparisons, analysis of covariance, factor analysis, discriminant analysis, log-linear analysis, and path analysis. For the research instructor concerned about discussing the currently applied methodologies in educational research and statistics classes, these techniques merit consideration. While this list is certainly not definitive, the related literature supports a focus on at least the first few methods in the list. (Author)

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STATISTICAL METHODOLOGY CONTENT ANALYSIS  
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Spring, 1988

TM 012-018

# STATISTICAL METHODOLOGY CONTENT ANALYSIS OF SELECTED EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH JOURNALS

## ABSTRACT

A selection of sixty-seven educational research journals were investigated to determine the frequency of usage of inferential statistical techniques therein. The most frequently used statistical methodologies in the literature reviewed, which utilized inferential approaches, are the following techniques: analysis of variance (ANOVA), correlation, t-test, multiple analysis of variance (MANOVA), multiple regression, chi square, post-hoc multiple comparisons, analysis of covariance (ANCOVA), factor analysis, discriminant analysis, log-linear analysis, and path analysis. For the research instructor concerned about discussing the currently applied methodologies in educational research and statistics classes, these techniques merit consideration. While the list is certainly not definitive, the support of the related literature tends to encourage a focus on at least the first few methods in the list.

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# STATISTICAL METHODOLOGY CONTENT ANALYSIS OF SELECTED EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH JOURNALS

## Introduction

Numerous statistical methodologies have been developed for use as research tools in data analysis. So many approaches are available, in fact, that it has become virtually impossible to teach them all in a single statistics or research class. The lack of time for a comprehensive overview takes on even greater significance for the instructor of a research class for which there is no statistics prerequisite. The research instructor, then, must determine which statistical procedures are most appropriate for discussion in the small amount of time available for this purpose.

Assuming that an appropriate goal of a research course is to help develop research consumers, then it would seem reasonable to conclude that the students should become familiar with the statistical methodologies most frequently utilized in the relevant literature. Frequency counts have been employed by researchers for this purpose, among others, when analyzing professional journals and the articles appearing in them: Goodwin & Goodwin (1985), reviewed 449 articles published in the Journal of Educational Psychology for major statistical techniques. Wallace (1985) examined 3465 articles in 99 journals from library and information science, social work, business, and education, to compare the use of statistical methods in these areas. Alpert & Yammer (1983)

analyzed school consultation articles in 155 issues of school psychology literature. Willson (1980) categorized the research and statistical techniques found in the American Educational Research Journal, according to discipline. Rabinowitz and Pruzek (1978) investigated factor analytical methods in eighty-nine studies in four educational and psychological journals.

In designing the study, a number of questions arose, including the number of journals to investigate, which journals, number of issues or years of each, and whether to choose consecutive years, a sample, or blocks of time. Appelbaum (1986) analyzed articles in Psychometrika over the period 1960-1984 and found 173 papers of a statistical nature. Ash and Love-Clark (1985) reviewed forty-eight educational psychology textbooks published from 1954 through 1983, randomly selected from those available in their campus library. Goodwin and Goodwin (1985) investigated the Journal of Educational Psychology over the five-year period 1979-1983. They drew a stratified random sample of 150 of the 449 articles published during that period. Wallace (1985) examined statistical use in each article in each 1981 issue of ninety-nine journals listed in the Journal Citation Reports section of the Social Sciences Citation Index. Alpert and Yanner (1983) analyzed 132 research articles in four research journals over a twelve-year period between 1970 and mid-1982 to determine the occurrence of research in school consultation. West, Carmody, & Stallings, (1983) analyzed empirical research articles in the Journal of Educational Research in 1970 and 1980 to determine if there were any qualitative differences. Gaziano (1982) reviewed fifty-eight studies

related to knowledge gap without regard to publication dates. West and Robinson (1980) randomly selected seventy-eight empirical research articles from the American Educational Research Journal, The Journal of Educational Psychology, and the Journal of Educational Research from as early as 1910, through 1974.

Rabinowitz and Pruzek (1978) reviewed eighty-nine studies in the same four journals as Glass and Taylor (1966) for the years 1975-1976. Glass and Taylor studied papers in the American Educational Research Journal (1965-March, 1966), the Journal of Educational Measurement (1964-1965), the Journal of Educational Psychology (1963-April, 1966), and Educational and Psychological Measurement (1963-Spring, 1966). Edgington (1974) tabulated the inferential statistical procedures used in seven American Psychological Association journals published between 1948 to 1972.

### The Problem

The problem of this study was to conduct a frequency count of the inferential statistical techniques used in selected recent educational research journals.

### Methodology

Journals were selected based on their availability in the University of Central Arkansas Torreyson Library, similar to the approach of using the



Sterling Evans Library on the Texas A & M University campus taken by Ash and Love-Clark (1985). Basic measures of central tendency, including means and standard deviations, were excluded following the approach of West, Carmody, & Stallings (1983). Editorials, letters to the editor, news items, book lists, bibliographies, and book reviews were also excluded, similar to the approach of Wallace (1985).

The journals which formed the database for the study were chosen from a list of research-oriented educational publications listed in a research text, Research in Education (Best & Kahn, 1986, p. 367-8). The journals actually investigated were limited to those publications to which the library subscribed which were not in the process of being bound and which were published between September, 1987, and March, 1988. January/February issues were chosen rather than March/April issues when the choice arose. Otherwise, the latest available issue was chosen.

Of the 143 journals listed, Torreyson Library held subscriptions to sixty-eight, of which one journal, Pollution Abstracts, was considered inappropriate for the study because it is comprised of abstracts rather than complete articles. The first empirical research article in the issue of each journal selected for inclusion in the study was perused for the type of statistical methodology or methodologies utilized. Each technique was counted only one time per article even if it appeared more than once. A list of the sixty-seven journals comprising the database appears in the appendix.

## Findings

The frequency of occurrence of each statistical technique is recorded in tabular form on page 6. The results are similar to the findings of related studies (Appelbaum, 1986; Goodwin & Goodwin, 1985; West, Carmody, & Stallings, 1983) in that the analysis of variance (ANOVA and MANOVA), correlational, t-test, multiple regression, and chi square procedures are among the most frequently utilized statistical methods.

The statistical techniques listed include variations. For example, ANOVA includes both one- and two-way analyses. Correlation includes Pearson's "r" and Kendall's tau. The t-test includes directional and nondirectional approaches. The other techniques are similarly representative of the methods listed and the techniques closely related to them.

## Limitations

The selection of journals is open to some question since not all educational research publications were available for consideration. However, the wide selection of journals which were available seems on face value to be reasonably representative. Reviewing all of the articles in each of the sixty-seven journal issues selected might have provided a more representative sample.

Table 1  
Statistical Techniques by Frequency and Percentages

Statistical Technique	Frequency	% of 67 Journals Sampled	% of 34 Inferential Journals
ANOVA	15	22%	44%
Correlation	7	10%	21%
t-test	7	10%	21%
MANOVA	6	9%	18%
Multiple Regression	6	9%	18%
Chi Square	5	7%	15%
Post-Hoc Comparisons	5	7%	15%
ANCOVA	4	6%	12%
Factor Analysis	4	6%	12%
Discriminant Analysis	3	4%	9%
Log-linear Analysis	2	3%	6%
Path Analysis	2	3%	6%
Other	2	3%	6%
None	4	6%	12%

## Conclusions

From the results of this study, it appears that among the dozen most frequently used statistical methodologies in the educational research literature which utilized inferential approaches are the following techniques: analysis of variance (ANOVA), correlation, t-test, multiple analysis of variance (MANOVA), multiple regression, chi square, post-hoc multiple comparisons, analysis of covariance (ANCOVA), factor analysis, discriminant analysis, log-linear analysis, and path analysis. For the research instructor concerned about discussing the currently applied methodologies in educational research and statistics classes, these techniques merit consideration. While the list is certainly not definitive, the support of the related literature tends to encourage a focus on at least the first few methods in the list.

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- Willson, V. L. (1980). Research techniques in AERJ articles: 1969-1978. Educational Researcher, 9(6), 5-10, cited in Goodwin & Goodwin, op. cit.

## Appendix

### Journals Investigated for Statistical Techniques

Administrative Science Quarterly  
Adolescence  
Adult Education Quarterly  
American Behavioral Scientist  
American Biology Teacher  
American Educational Research Journal  
Arithmetic Teacher  
Black Scholar  
Business Education Forum  
Child and Youth Care Quarterly  
Child Development  
Child Study Journal  
Childhood Education  
Clearing House  
Community, Technical, and Junior College Journal  
Comparative Education  
Comparative Education Review  
Educational Administration Quarterly  
Educational Forum  
Educational Leadership  
Educational Researcher  
Educational Research Quarterly  
Educational Technology  
Elementary School Journal  
Harvard Educational Review  
High School Journal  
History of Education Quarterly  
Home Economics Research Journal  
International Journal of Aging and Human Development  
Journal for Research in Mathematics Education  
Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion  
Journal of Communication  
Journal of Creative Behavior  
Journal of Drug Education  
Journal of Educational Research  
Journal of Experimental Education  
Journal of Higher Education  
Journal of Home Economics  
Journal of Law and Education  
Journal of Leisure Research  
Journal of Negro Education  
Journal of Religion  
Journal of Research and Development in Education  
Journal of Research in Music Education  
Journal of Research in Science Teaching  
Kappa Delta Pi Record  
Library Resources and Technical Services  
Mathematics Teacher

Merrill Palmer Quarterly  
Modern Language Journal  
North Central Association Quarterly  
Outlook  
Peabody Journal of Education  
Phi Delta Kappan  
Phylon  
Public Opinion Quarterly  
Research in Higher Education  
Research in the Teaching of English  
Review of Educational Research  
School Science and Mathematics  
Science  
Science Education  
Science Teacher  
Social Education  
Teachers College Record  
Theory into Practice  
Young Children